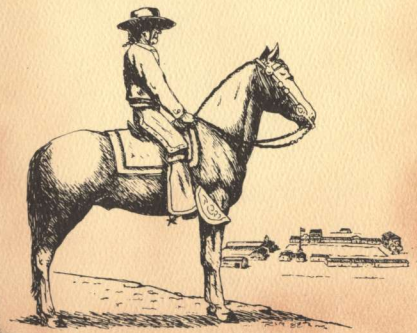
State of California • The Resources Agency
Department of Parks & Recreation
P.O. Box 942896 • Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

10-93

Old Town San Diego

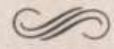
State Historic Park

Tour Guide & Brief History



Old Town San Diego

State Historic Park



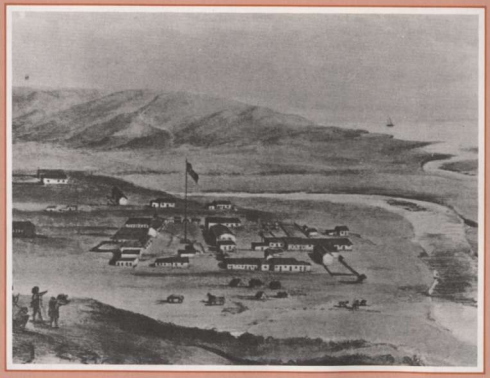
Tour Guide & Brief History

Published in cooperation with
Boosters of Old Town (B.O.O.T.)

Design, Layout & Cover Illustration
by Ron Warr

Old Town San Diego State Historic Park
2645 San Diego Ave.
San Diego, California 92110
(619) 237-6770

Old Town in 1850.



Old Town San Diego State Historic Park recreates the setting of California life of the Mexican and early American periods, 1821 to 1872. Its displays, historic buildings, and shops and restaurants illustrate the vast changes that have taken place in San Diego since it was first settled in 1769.

Old Town became a state historic park in 1968, and work was begun to restore and stabilize its buildings, particularly the remaining original adobes. Three of these – La Casa de Estudillo, Machado y Stewart, and Machado y Silvas – have been restored; the Seeley Stable and the store of Racine and Laramie (Casa de Juan Rodriguez) have been reconstructed. La Casa de Bandini, which became Albert Seeley's Cosmopolitan Hotel, is now a restaurant; the Altamirano Pedrorena House is also used for commercial purposes.

Entrance fees can be paid at Seeley Stable where a slide show depicts San Diego's early history. Locations of the buildings described below are shown on the map of the park that appears on pages 16-17 in the center of this booklet. Guided tours of the park start in front of the Robinson-Rose building (No. 1 on the map) every day at 2 p.m.

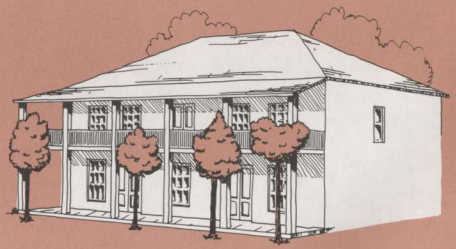
① Robinson-Rose House

James W. Robinson came to San Diego from Texas in the spring of 1850. In the ensuing seven years he was involved in almost every aspect of San Diego's development. Thoroughly familiar with American and Mexican law, Robinson developed quite a successful law practice.

Robinson built this two-story structure in 1853 to serve not only as his family residence, but also as the home of the San Diego Herald, the San Diego and Gila Railroad Office, as well as numerous other stores and private offices. It was, in effect, the commercial center of Old Town in the early American Period.

Robinson died in 1857, but his widow Sarah held onto the building for another decade even though the San Diego Herald and other long-time tenants moved out as a result of unfavorable economic conditions during the 1860's.

In May, 1868 Sarah Robinson sold the building to long-time Old Town resident Louis Rose. Rose was an irrepressible entrepreneur. Not only did he speculate in real estate, but he also ran a variety of businesses ranging from tanneries to mattress manufacturing. Rose probably purchased the property as a family residence, since he married in the following year. Fire destroyed part of the roof in 1874, and the building fell into ruins by the turn of the century.

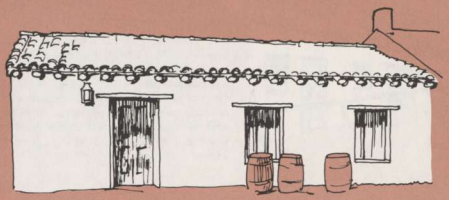


② Wrightington House

The Wrightington adobe was built in the late Mexican period with a wing constructed in 1852. It served as the personal residence of the Wrightington family. After Thomas Wrightington's death in 1853, Juana Wrightington remained in the adobe until illness forced her to leave in the late 1890's. Throughout the years various family members lived with the widow, frequently for years at a time. Dr. George McKinstry, Jr. used a room in the Wrightington adobe for his personal residence and office for almost thirty years. Both he and Juana Wrightington provided medical care for Native Americans in San Diego County.

③ San Diego House

This very early adobe was probably built by Hilario Ponciano, but it was sold to Henry Fitch in 1841. In 1847, Fitch leased the house to Richard Freeman, who later occupied the site with his friend, Allen B. Light. Light and Freeman were the first blacks in San Diego. They operated a tiny saloon in the structure which they called the San Diego House. Freeman died in 1851, and Allen Light subsequently left the area. In 1857, George Smith purchased the parcel for the mere payment of unpaid taxes. In the late 1860's the American Hotel was built over the site of the Light-Freeman adobe.



④ United States House

Charles Noell and John Hayes operated a general store out of this two story prefabricated wooden building as early as 1850. City and county auctioneer P.H. Hooff ran public sales here as well. In March 1854, Hayes leased the structure to Robert Lloyd and Edward Kerr, who named their business the "U.S. House." During the San Diego boom period of the 1850s, respective entrepreneurs housed a butcher shop and a match factory in the historic prefab.

⑤ La Casa de Machado y Silvas

Jose Nicasio Silvas, who built this house between 1830 and 1843, lived here for many years with his wife, Maria Antonia Machado, and children. Their home stayed in the family for over a hundred years; then it became a boarding house, saloon, restaurant, art studio, souvenir shop, museum, and church. Now restored, it is used for audio-visual programs and a house museum.

⑥ Racine and Laramie

Juan Rodriguez, a Mexican soldier who had received the land as compensation for his service, probably built his home here in the 1830s. It burned in the great fire of 1872, and Geoffrey Mogilner has reconstructed it under an agreement with the State. It is now furnished with period pieces to recreate the store of Racine and Laramie, who sold "cigars, tobacco, stationery, and furnishing goods" here in 1869.

⑦ The Franklin House (site)

In 1855 Lewis Franklin purchased the recently renovated Exchange Hotel, razed it, and built an ambitious three story hotel which he named the Franklin House. The San Diego Herald claimed it was the second largest hotel in Southern California.

Franklin intended to use the new structure as a hotel, and to move his "Tienda California" store onto the ground floor. From the beginning, however, both were plagued with financial and legal problems and although Franklin later renovated the bar, added a billiard saloon, attached baths, and a livery stable. His venture ended in financial ruin by 1858.

Throughout the 1860s the District Court leased the hotel to a variety of businessmen, the most successful of whom was Joseph Mannasse who enlarged the hotel in 1868. For a brief period there was prosperity, but business slumped once again as New Town thrived. The building was destroyed by fire in 1872. Although not always a financial success, the Franklin Hotel served as the show place of Old Town. It was frequently mentioned in the press as the scene of grand balls, and bands played from its balcony during wedding and birthday celebrations. Famous residents included Secretary of State William H. Seward and actress Lola Montez.

⑧ Colorado House

In 1849, a twenty-eight year old U.S. Army Lieutenant of Dragoons, Cave Johnson Couts, arrived in San Diego with his unit to provide protection for the Boundary Commission that would establish the post-war border between the United States and Mexico.

While in San Diego, Couts married Ysidora Bandini, daughter of his close friend, Juan Bandini. He also completed the first subdivision map of the town's pueblo lands for a $2,000 commission.

Construction of the Colorado House began in the summer of 1850 amid controversy that the Lieutenant had obtained the property illegally. But in the summer of 1851 the two-story hotel opened across the Plaza from the Bandini House. Initially the hotel was a success and Couts added a "spacious and airy dining saloon." He also installed a billiard table and boasted that his liquor, wine and cigar selection was on a par with San Francisco.

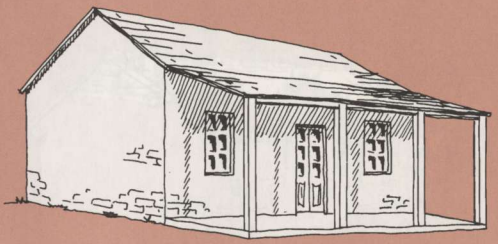
Within a year Couts began to lose interest in the hotel, and directed his efforts to the development of Rancho Guajome in northern San Diego County. For fifteen years he leased out the hotel to various managers who operated it with limited success.

In the same year (1866) that Couts was found not guilty of murdering his Guajome foreman on the plaza outside the Colorado, he sold the building to the owners of the adjoining Franklin House. In 1872 both structures burned in a fire that accelerated the decline of Old Town. Reconstructed in 1992, this building now houses a Wells Fargo Museum.

⑨ First San Diego Courthouse

The Mormon Battalion arrived in San Diego in January of 1847 to support the American military garrison in the pueblo during the Mexican War. When not engaged in military duties, they assisted the community by building the first fired-brick structure in Old Town. The building, 16' x 27', originally designated as a townhall and school room, stood on the corner of the Plaza facing San Diego Avenue.

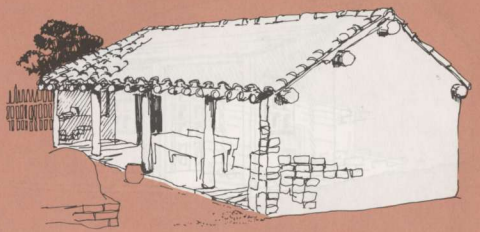
On March 27, 1850 the state legislature incorporated San Diego as the first city in California. From that time until fire destroyed the building in 1872, the old brick courthouse was the heart of San Diego's first Anglo-American civic center. It was reconstructed in 1992 by the First San Diego Courthouse Association.



⑩ La Casa de Machado y Stewart

Jose Manuel Machado built this home in the 1830s. Jack Stewart, a native of Maine who had visited San Diego in 1835, returned to stay in 1838. He served in the American army and later became a pilot on one of the pilot boats in San Diego Bay. In 1845, he married Machado's youngest daughter, and the couple moved into this house to live with the Machados. When her parents died, Rosa Stewart paid off the claims of her brothers and sisters to the house, and she and her husband lived here until their deaths.

The house was occupied by descendants of the Stewarts until 1966, when deterioration of the structure forced its occupants to move. The State acquired it in 1867 and has restored it as a house exhibit.



⑪ Mason Street School

A public school was started in San Diego in 1850, though this structure was not built until 1865. The first teacher here was Mary Chase Walker from Massachusetts, who received a salary of $65 per month. She described her new home as "a most desolate looking landscape. Of all the dilapidated, miserable looking places... this was the worst."After 11 months she resigned her position and married the president of the school board.

The Mason Street School is presently operated by the San Diego Historical Days Association.

⑫ Altamirano-Pedrorena House

Miguel de Pedrorena, a native of Madrid, came to San Diego as a supercargo (ship's agent) and in 1842 married one of the Estudillos' daughters. He claimed a lot next to his in-laws' home but died in 1850, before he could build. His son, Miguel Jr., built the home in 1869. In 1871, the home was transferred to Isabel Pedrorena de Altamirano and remained as a family residence until 1907.

⑬ San Diego Union Building

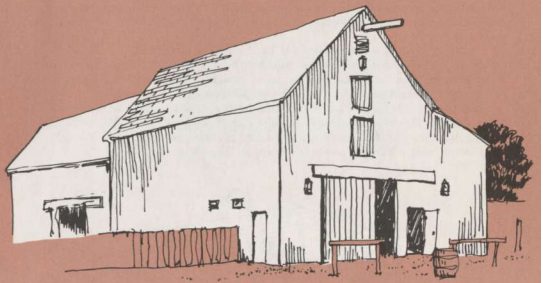
This wood-frame structure was prefabricated in Maine and shipped around the Horn in 1851. It became the first home of the San Diego Union, and has been restored as nearly as possible to its appearance in 1868, when the first edition of the newspaper came off the press. The exhibit depicts a typical newsroom layout and editor's office.

⑭ The Seeley Stable

In 1867, Albert Seeley launched the San Diego-Los Angeles Stage Line. His Concord stages could make the 130-mile trip in less than 24 hours, barring accidents.

By May 1869, the business was doing so well that Seeley bought the former home of Juan Bandini to serve as a hotel. By 1875, stages were running daily, but the Southern Pacific Railroad's coming to Anaheim in 1876 marked a turning point, and extension of the railroad to San Diego in 1887 put the old stage line out of business.

The reconstructed Seeley stable and barns house a collection of horse-drawn vehicles and Western memorabilia such as saddles and branding irons contributed by Roscoe E. "Pappy" Hazard, who also contributed toward rebuilding the structures. This collection, described as "irreplaceable," also contains Indian artifacts, some of them as much as three thousand years old. A slide program about San Diego's early history is given at the stable daily.



⑮ Black Hawk Smithy & Stable

During the 1860s, J.B. Hinton opened the Black Hawk Stable adjacent to the Bandini House near Juan Street. He sold feed and provided accommodations for both teams and teamsters. Vintage blacksmithing techniques are demonstrated on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

⑯ La Casa de Bandini

Born in Peru, Juan Bandini came to California with his father, master of a trading vessel, in 1819. He became a Mexican citizen and son-in-law to Jose Maria Estudillo in 1822. La Casa de Bandini, completed in 1829, soon became Old Town's social center; its owner was described as a charming public speaker, fluent writer, excellent dancer, fair musician, and fine horseman.

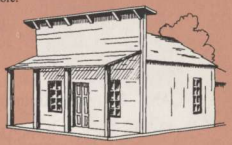
Constantly involved in political schemes, Bandini held various offices during the Mexican regime, but when the Americans took over San Diego he invited Commodore Stockton to make his headquarters at La Casa de Bandini. During the American occupation of San Diego, Bandini provided the Americans with supplies and horses from his rancho.

In the early 1850s Bandini suffered financial losses and had to sell his home. The new owner, Albert Seeley, added a second story and opened the building to the public as the Cosmopolitan Hotel. In later years the casa was used as a store, pickle factory, and motel annex before being acquired as part of Old Town San Diego State Historic Park.

⑰ The Johnson House

The nineteenth century owner of the original modest frame house, George Alonzo Johnson, gained fame and wealth as a steamboat operator on the Colorado River. George and Estafana Johnson lived on the Penasquitos Rancho about 20 miles from Old Town. While Old Town struggled in the 1860s, Johnson prospered and was elected to the State Assembly in 1863 and again in 1865. The house may have been built in 1869 as an office for one of Johnson's brothers or as a convenient Old Town residence for Estafana. For a time in the 1870s the building housed a grocery store.

Struck hard by business reverses, Johnson lost his Penasquitos Ranch in 1880. Even his appointment as Collector of the Port of San Diego in 1883 could not halt the family's slide into poverty. Sometime in the 1880s Johnson moved his family into the Old Town house, and they remained there until his death in 1903.

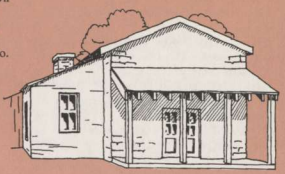


An archeological exhibit which describes various projects undertaken in Old Town is housed in this building.

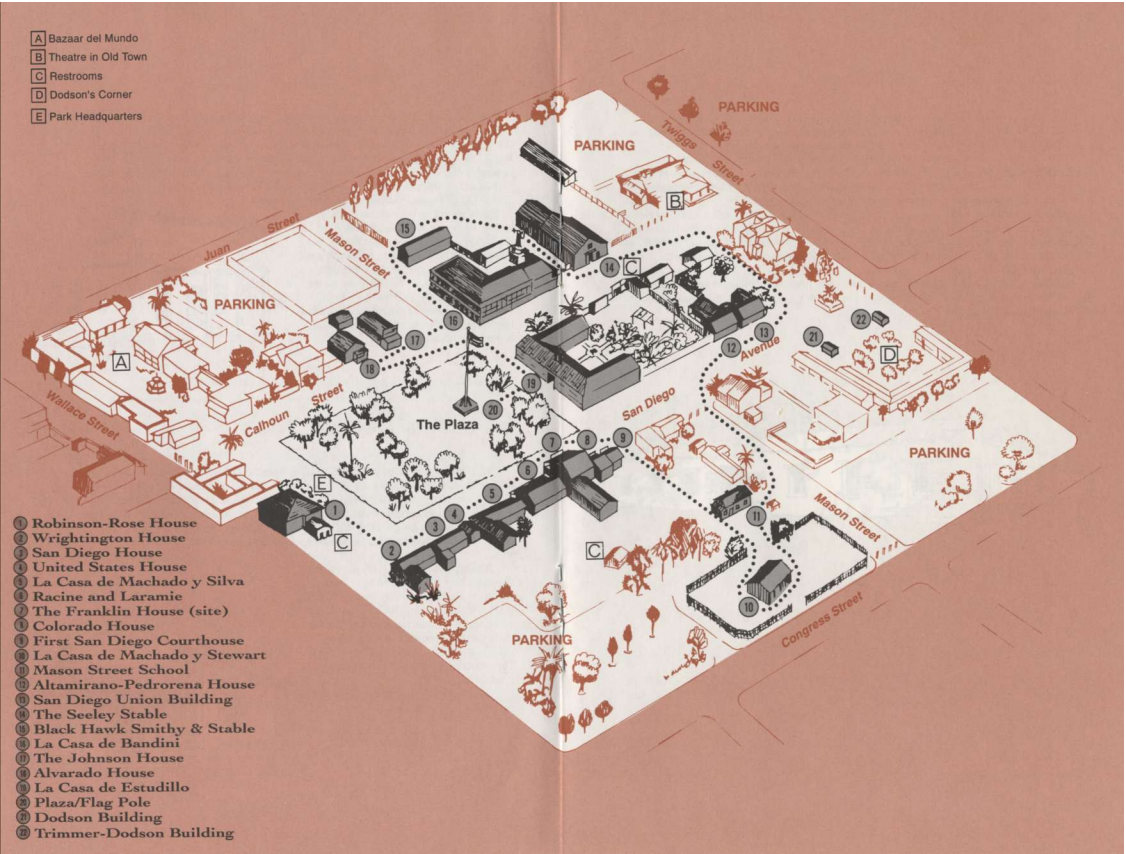
⑱ Alvarado House

In 1854 the San Diego grand jury charged Francisco Alvarado with operating a disorderly house (illegal liquor sales) presumably in an adobe shed in the rear of this house. The property changed hands but stayed in the family throughout the 1850s, although Mr. and Mrs. Alvarado did host a wedding celebration for their daughter Estafana and George Alonzo Johnson on June 4, 1859 in the adobe. The building remained functional until 1874, but its demise after that was symbolic of the slow deterioration of the Old Town area.

The original Alvarado House was built sometime between 1824 and 1830, making it one of the earliest structures on the Old Town Plaza. Throughout the Mexican Period, the adobe was one of the residences of Tomasa Pico, sister of Mexican California's last governor, and Francisco and Maria Alvarado. The couple's major residence was Rancho Penasquitos.



This house is presently furnished and operated as a general store.


A Bazaar del Mundo
B Theatre in Old Town
C Restrooms
D Dodson's Corner
E Park Headquarters
PARKING
PARKING
PARKING
PARKING
PARKING
Juan Street
Mason Street
Twiggs Street
Wallace Street
Calhoun Street
The Plaza
San Diego Avenue
Mason Street
Congress Street
1 Robinson-Rose House
2 Wrightington House
3 San Diego House
4 United States House
5 La Casa de Machado y Silva
6 Racine and Laramie
7 The Franklin House (site)
8 Colorado House
9 First San Diego Courthouse
10 La Casa de Machado y Stewart
11 Mason Street School
12 Altamirano-Pedrorena House
13 San Diego Union Building
14 The Seeley Stable
15 Black Hawk Smithy & Stable
16 La Casa de Bandini
17 The Johnson House
18 Alvarado House
19 La Casa de Estudillo
20 Plaza/Flag Pole
21 Dodson Building
22 Trimmer-Dodson Building

⑲ La Casa de Estudillo

The most famous of Old Town's original adobes is La Casa de Estudillo. Construction began in 1827 and was completed in June of 1829 by Captain Jose Maria de Estudillo, commander of the San Diego presidio. When he died in 1830, the house passed to his son Jose Antonio.

The younger Estudillo served variously as revenue collector, treasurer, alcalde, and judge of San Diego under the Mexican regime. When the American government was established, he was appointed treasurer and assessor of San Diego County. He married Maria Victoria Dominguez, and they lived in the house with their seven sons and five daughters.

After Jose Antonio's death, his widow and a daughter and her husband resided here. Other members of the family lived in the adobe until 1887, when it was turned over to a caretaker who sold the tiles, locks, doors, and windows. In 1905, the Estudillos sold the remains of the house, and in 1910 it was restored with funds provided by the Spreckles family, the work supervised by Architect Hazel W. Waterman.

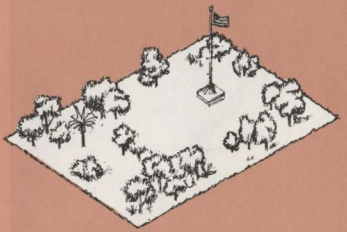
La Casa de Estudillo was donated to the State by Mr. Legler Benbough; its furnishings and those of La Casa de Machado y Stewart were provided with the assistance of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America.

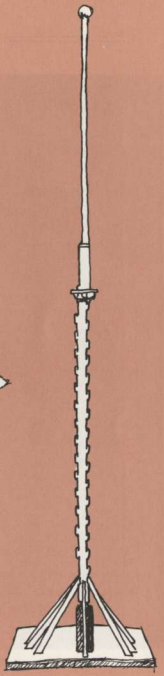
The Estudillo house was long known as "Ramona's Marriage Place" though it was not the spot referred to in Helen Hunt Jackson's 1884 novel. Mrs. Jackson wrote the immensely popular Ramona *from material gathered on her three visits to California as a presidential commissioner investigating the plight of the Indians. Her romantic view of old California survives to this day in furniture design, architecture, movies and popular fiction.*

⑳ Plaza / Flag Pole

The plaza, called "La Plaza de Las Armas," was the scene of many a fiesta and ceremony during the Mexican period. The Stars and Stripes were raised here on July 29, 1846 by a detachment of marines from the U.S Navy sloop, *Cyane*. Torn down in the heat of the Mexican-American War, it was supposedly restored to its rightful position by Albert Smith. Since the flagpole towered over the tiny settlement in Powell's 1850 sketch of Old Town, tradition maintained that the pole was made from a ship's main mast.

From this point you can see the hilltop to the east of Old Town where the original presido was built in 1769.



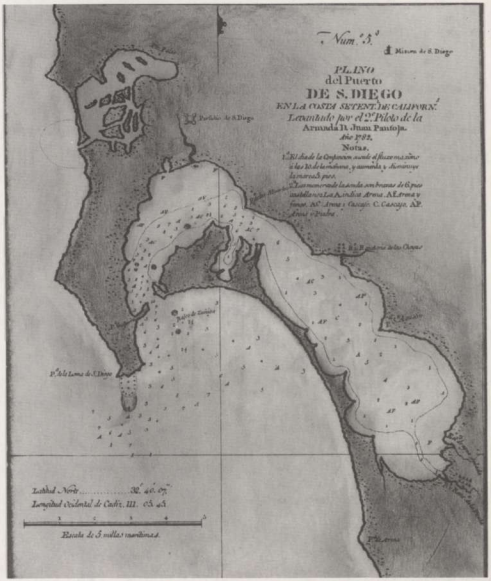


㉑ Dodson Building

Residence and law office of Nelson H. Dodson, September 1869 to January 1871.

㉒ Trimmer-Dodson Building

Residence of the Prussian-born merchant and hotel operator, Martin Trimmer, 1872 to 1874.



Map of San Diego Bay printed in 1782 shows the location of the Presidio and the second site of the Mission.

San Diego's Beginnings

Though Captain Juan Rodriques Cabrillo claimed California for Spain in 1542, his discovery held no attractions to compare with the riches of Mexico. It wasn't until the latter half of the eighteenth century that Russian activity in the North Pacific and troubles with unpacified Indian tribes made the Spanish government decide to colonize California as a buffer for her better established colonies.

Five expeditions were mounted – two traveling overland and three by sea – to begin the project. Though seriously handicapped by accident and disease, by July 1769 four of these expeditions had united at San Diego Bay to found California's first settlement.

The leadership of the combined expeditions, and establishment of a presidio – fort – at San Diego, were the responsibility of Gaspar de Portolá. Accompanying him was Fray Junípero Serra, who on July 16, 1769 founded the Mother Mission of California – San Diego de Alcalá.

Father Junipero Serra tirelessly pursued his goal of bringing Indian souls to God despite physical infirmity, hardship, and hostility from both the Indians and the Spanish military governors; when he died in 1784, California had nine missions.

Who Were The First San Diegans?

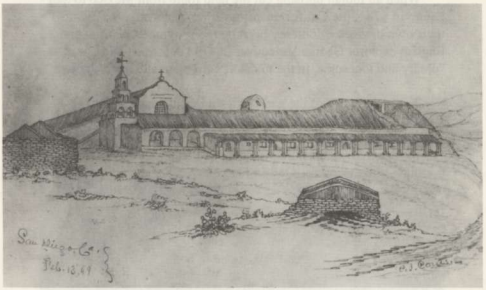
The Spanish called the natives that they encountered in the San Diego area San Diegueños, but these Indians themselves do not seem to have had a collective name for the area's thirty-odd clans, which anthropologists are now designating as Tipai and Ipai – meaning, roughly, *people.*

Before the Spanish came, the *people* lived a semi-nomadic life, moving as the season and food supply dictated, from canyon floor to mountain slope and back.

The coming of the Spanish spelled the end of this traditional lifestyle. Their policy was aimed at making the Indians Spanish, using the missions as a colonizing tool. The padres were to organize groups of natives, Christianize them, and teach them agriculture and various trades; then the mission would be ready for "pueblo" status and the Indians on their way to becoming citizens.

To begin this program, the padres insisted that the Indians live at the mission, and problems soon arose. The missions could not supply enough food, the Indian "neophytes" were punished for infractions of Spanish customs that they did not understand, the soldiers molested Indian women, and the Indians caught European diseases to which they had no immunity. All this caused increasing strains on the relations between the Indians and the newcomers, and in 1775 the Indians attacked the San Diego mission, burned it, and killed Father Luis Jayme.

Though the Indians of the San Diego area resisted the changes more strongly than most California tribes, by 1800 around fifteen hundred of them were living in and around Mission San Diego. When the mission lands became private property, Indians following the old ways were considered trespassers on their own ancestral grounds. Throughout the Spanish, Mexican and early American periods the Indians' lot remained the same – poverty and servitude.



The mission's original site on Presidio Hill did not offer an adequate water supply, and deteriorating relations between the soldiers and Indians may also have contributed to the 1774 decision to move it away from the Presidio, six miles up the valley of the San Diego River to its present location.

The Presidio

For its first few years, the San Diego settlement's existence was precarious. Supplies and reinforcements were a major problem – early farming efforts were unsuccessful, and travel between the new colony and the more settled areas to the south was difficult and hazardous. Moreover, the Indians were unfriendly. Internal difficulties between the military governor of the settlement and the padres plagued the little community and this, added to the tremendous cost of the colony, almost led to its abandonment.

When an Indian uprising cut the land route from Mexico to San Diego in 1781, the California colonies were left more or less to their own devices. Monterey became the province's capital, and English explorer George Vancouver in 1793 described San Diego as "dreary and lonesome, in the midst of barren, uncultivated country."

The main duties of the garrison's soldiers were guarding the mission, carrying mail and dispatches, and caring for the livestock. Though the number of soldiers was small – in 1778 there were only 125 residents in the presidio including soldiers, artisans, and their families – they were mounted and armed with lances, and could usually keep the peace among the far more numerous Indians.

Fighting with the English made Spain realize the defenseless condition of her California colonies, so in 1795 work began at the port of San Diego on a battery intended to house ten guns, as well as on repairs and improvements to the presidio's crumbling adobe fortifications. The garrison was also increased, and by 1800 San Diego's Spanish population had risen to 167.

Spanish trading ships were few and far between, so Yankee traders found the trade in California hides and furs profitable despite the fact that its ports were officially closed to foreign traders. In 1803 the American ship *Lelia Bird* put in at San Diego, ostensibly for supplies; on the night before she was to sail, two boats went ashore to pick up otter pelts that the ships' cargo manager had purchased from the garrison's soldiers. One boat was captured, but its crew was soon released by a rescue party, and the *Lelia Bird* weighed anchor. As she left the harbor the small guns of the battery on shore kept her under continuous fire, but when she got into position to deliver a broadside the battery was quickly abandoned.

The Mexican Period

Nearly cut off from Mexico, California paid little attention to the Mexican fight for independence, and though the province had been largely Loyalist in sentiment it accepted the new government almost without demur.

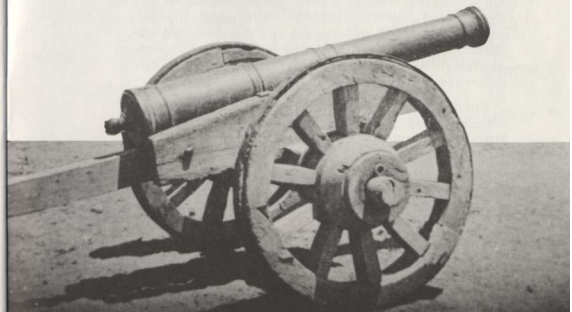
One result of the change in government was the temporary removal of the province's capital from Monterey to San Diego. In 1826, mountain man Jedediah Smith, first Yankee to cross overland into Mexican California, received a chilly reception from Governor Echeandia. The governor's attitude toward the party of trapper James Ohio Pattie in 1828 was even less cordial. He tore up their passports and had the whole party thrown in prison where Pattie's father died of despair and malnutrition. When Pattie was released, months later, he made his way back to the United States and published a bitter narrative of his experiences that nevertheless extolled the virtues of California's country and climate.

Burial of Pattie's father on Presidio Hill.

Old Town

For its first fifty years, San Diego's life centered around the presidio and mission. But gradually soldiers who had retired or were attempting to eke out their meager pay began to cultivate plots of land outside presidal boundaries. A plaza was laid out in the early 1820s to form the center of the new settlement, and this community grew steadily as the presidio declined in importance. Richard Henry Dana, Jr. described Old Town in the mid-1830s, when it had become large enough to qualify as a pueblo, as "about forty dark brown looking huts...and three or four larger ones, white-washed, which belong to the *gente de razón* (upper class)."

By this time the presidio was in a ruinous state, with "only two guns, one of which was spiked...twelve half clothed and half starved looking fellows composed the garrison..." and in 1837, when an army was formed at Los Angeles, all the troops from the San Diego presidio joined it. The army was soon disbanded due to lack of supplies and pay, but no troops returned to San Diego... thus the historic presidio was abandoned.



The Ranchos

As the missions and presidios declined in economic and social importance, the ranchos and rancheros gained. The Mexican government, to decrease the power and importance of the Church, forced secularization of mission property, "It being a matter of greatest necessity that the neophytes rise from the state of abasement to which they find themselves reduced...to be distrubuted to such as are fitted for it such fields of the mission lands as they may be capable of cultivating, in order that they may...go on acquiring property."

However noble the purposes stated, the Indians benefited little from secularization – most of them lost their grants, so the mission lands and livestock became part of the great ranchos.

Mexican independence had eliminated the embargo on California's foreign trade, and ships of New England soon took advantage of the opportunity to buy hides and tallow from the vast ranchos. San Diego's bay and climate were perfect for curing hides; called "California banknotes," they were bartered for the ships' cargos of civilized amenities.

At the matanzas, or slaughterings, hundreds of cattle were killed, their hides scraped, and the tallow rendered out in large iron pots and poured into skin bags for transport. The hide-and-tallow trade was immortalized by a young Harvard man, Richard Henry Dana, Jr., who came to San Diego as a seaman in the mid-1830s and described his experiences in *Two Years Before the Mast.*

But despite their vast land holdings, cattle and horses in abundance, and cheap Indian labor, San Diego rancheros never enjoyed the prosperity of their northern compatriots.

A wedding pictured in the romantic California style.

The Coming Of The Americans

Americans had been trickling into California since around 1800 – traders, trappers, explorers, whalers, and seamen had settled, adopted California ways, and become part of the community. But in 1841 a new kind of immigrant appeared – pioneers from the Midwest seeking to establish farms and homes.

The increasing numbers of Americans living in California, the ideas of Manifest Destiny and the Monroe Doctrine, the strategic importance of San Francisco Bay, Mexico's weak control of California affairs – not to mention California's resources – all no doubt played a part in the United States' interest in acquiring the territory.

Old Town entered the American period when a party of Marines and sailors from the U.S. *Cyane* raised the flag over the plaza on July 29, 1846. For the next few months possession of San Diego alternated between U.S. troops and the Californios, but finally Commodore Robert Stockton arrived with reinforcements and secured the town for the United States. Fighting between the Californios and U.S. troops ended in January 1847 and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed in February 1848, put Texas, New Mexico, and California under U.S. control.

Commodore Robert Stockton.

The Decline

After the Americans came, Old Town continued to grow for a time. Trappers and traders found their way to San Diego along the southern route, crossing the Colorado River at Fort Yuma; in the 1850s a "jackass mail" stage line ran from San Diego to San Antonio, and during the gold rush rancheros sold herds to the miners at premium prices so that San Diego's economy boomed. But in 1857 the new Butterfield's Great Overland Mail Route bypassed San Diego for Los Angeles, and years of drought in the 1860s, plus protracted litigation regarding their land claims, bankrupted many rancheros.

Gradually a new city that drew away Old Town's commerce grew up near the wharf, and a fire in 1872 that destroyed many of its buildings provided the final blow to its importance as the heart of San Diego.

La Casa de Estudillo in 1898.

The Department of Parks and Recreation extends its grateful appreciation to the Copley Press, the San Diego Title and Trust Insurance Company, and the California State Library for their cooperation in the production of this booklet and for permission to use many photographs and drawings.